

# In the United States Court of Federal Claims

## OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS

Filed: March 9, 2023

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HANNAH L. STEFFENS,

\*

UNPUBLISHED

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Petitioner,

\*

No. 19-556V

\*

v.

\*

Special Master Dorsey

\*

SECRETARY OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES,

\*

Decision Based on Stipulation; Human

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Papillomavirus (“HPV”) Vaccine;

\*

Meningococcal Vaccine (“MCV”); Postural

Respondent.

\*

Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome

\*

(“POTS”); Sleep Apnea; Major Depressive

\* \* \* \* \*

Disorder.

Lawrence Gene Michel, Kennedy Berkley, Salina, KS, for Petitioner.

Mallori Browne Openchowski, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for Respondent.

### **DECISION BASED ON STIPULATION<sup>1</sup>**

On April 15, 2019, Hannah L. Steffens (“Petitioner”)<sup>2</sup> filed a petition in the National Vaccine Injury Program<sup>3</sup> alleging that she suffered from postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (“POTS”), sleep apnea, and major depressive disorder as a result of a human papillomavirus (“HPV”) vaccine and a meningococcal vaccine (“MCV”) she received on July 21, 2016. Petition at Preamble (ECF No. 1).

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<sup>1</sup> Because this Decision contains a reasoned explanation for the action in this case, the undersigned is required to post it on the United States Court of Federal Claims’ website in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002. 44 U.S.C. § 3501 note (2012) (Federal Management and Promotion of Electronic Government Services). **This means the Decision will be available to anyone with access to the Internet.** In accordance with Vaccine Rule 18(b), Petitioner has 14 days to identify and move to redact medical or other information, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. If, upon review, the undersigned agrees that the identified material fits within this definition, the undersigned will redact such material from public access.

<sup>2</sup> This case was originally filed by Petitioner’s parents. The case caption was amended once Petitioner reached the age of majority.

<sup>3</sup> The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program is set forth in Part 2 of the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-660, 100 Stat. 3755, codified as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 300aa-10 to -34 (2012) (“Vaccine Act” or “the Act”). All citations in this Decision to individual sections of the Vaccine Act are to 42 U.S.C.A. § 300aa.

On March 9, 2023, the parties filed a stipulation recommending an award of compensation to Petitioner. Stipulation (ECF No. 93). Respondent denies that the HPV and MCV vaccines caused or significantly aggravated Petitioner's alleged POTS, sleep apnea, depressive disorder, or any other injury and further denies that her current disabilities are a sequela of a vaccine-related injury. Nevertheless, the parties agree to the joint stipulation, attached hereto as Appendix A. The undersigned finds the stipulation reasonable and adopts it as the decision of the Court in awarding damages, on the terms set forth therein.

The parties stipulate that Petitioner shall receive the following compensation:

**(1) A lump sum of \$6,300.00 representing reimbursement of unreimbursed medical expenses, in the form of a check payable to jointly to Petitioner and Anne Steffens; and**

**(2) A lump sum of \$43,700.00 in the form of a check payable to Petitioner.**

This amount represents compensation for all damages that would be available under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a). Stipulation at ¶ 8.

The undersigned approves the requested amount for Petitioner's compensation. Accordingly, an award should be made consistent with the stipulation.

In the absence of a motion for review filed pursuant to RCFC Appendix B, the Clerk of Court **SHALL ENTER JUDGMENT** in accordance with the terms of the parties' stipulation.<sup>4</sup>

**IT IS SO ORDERED.**

**s/Nora B. Dorsey**  
Nora B. Dorsey  
Special Master

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<sup>4</sup> Pursuant to Vaccine Rule 11(a), entry of judgment is expedited by the parties' joint filing of notice renouncing the right to seek review.

**IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF FEDERAL CLAIMS  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL MASTERS**

HANNAH L. STEFFENS,

Petitioner,

v.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES,

Respondent.

No. 19-556V  
Special Master Dorsey  
ECF

**STIPULATION**

The parties hereby stipulate to the following matters:

1. Petitioner, Hannah Steffens, filed a petition for vaccine compensation under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-10 to 34 (the “Vaccine Program”). The petition seeks compensation for injuries allegedly related to petitioner’s receipt of the human papilloma virus (“HPV”) and meningococcal (“MCV”) vaccines, which vaccines are contained in the Vaccine Injury Table (the “Table”), 42 C.F.R. § 100.3 (a).

2. Petitioner received HPV and MCV vaccines on or about July 21, 2016.

3. The vaccines were administered within the United States.

4. Petitioner alleges that she suffered postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (“POTS”), sleep apnea, and major depressive disorder as a consequence of the HPV and MCV vaccinations she received on or around July 21, 2016, and further alleges that she suffered the residual effects of these injuries for more than six months.

5. Petitioner represents that there has been no prior award or settlement of a civil action for damages on her behalf as a result of her condition.

6. Respondent denies that the HPV and MCV vaccines caused or significantly aggravated petitioner's alleged POTS, sleep apnea, depressive disorder, or any other injury and further denies that her current disabilities are a sequela of a vaccine-related injury.

7. Maintaining their above-stated positions, the parties nevertheless now agree that the issues between them shall be settled and that a decision should be entered awarding the compensation described in paragraph 8 of this Stipulation.

8. As soon as practicable after an entry of judgment reflecting a decision consistent with the terms of this Stipulation, and after petitioner has filed an election to receive compensation pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-21(a)(1), the Secretary of Health and Human Services will issue the following vaccine compensation payments:

(1) A lump sum of \$6,300.00 representing reimbursement of unreimbursed medical expenses, in the form of a check payable jointly to petitioner and Anne Steffens; and

(2) A lump sum of \$43,700.00 in the form of a check payable to petitioner, representing compensation for all damages that would be available under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a).

9. As soon as practicable after the entry of judgment on entitlement in this case, and after petitioner has filed both a proper and timely election to receive compensation pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-21(a)(1), and an application, the parties will submit to further proceedings before the special master to award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred in proceeding upon this petition.

10. Petitioner and her attorney represent that they have identified to respondent all known sources of payment for items or services for which the Program is not primarily liable under 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(g), including State compensation programs, insurance policies, Federal or State

health benefits programs (other than Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 1396 et seq.)), or entities that provide health services on a prepaid basis.

11. Payment made pursuant to paragraph 8 of this Stipulation and any amounts awarded pursuant to paragraph 9 will be made in accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(i), subject to the availability of sufficient statutory funds.

12. The parties and their attorneys further agree and stipulate that, except for any award for attorneys' fees and litigation costs, the money provided pursuant to this Stipulation will be used solely for the benefit of petitioner as contemplated by a strict construction of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(a) and (d), and subject to the conditions of 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-15(g) and (h).

13. In return for the payments described in paragraphs 8 and 9, petitioner, in her individual capacity, and on behalf of her heirs, executors, administrators, successors, and assigns, does forever irrevocably and unconditionally release, acquit and discharge the United States and the Secretary of Health and Human Services from any and all actions or causes of action (including agreements, judgments, claims, damages, loss of services, expenses and all demands of whatever kind or nature) that have been brought, could have been brought, or could be timely brought in the United States Court of Federal Claims, under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, 42 U.S.C. § 300aa-10 et seq., on account of, or in any way growing out of, any and all known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected personal injuries to or death of petitioner resulting from, or alleged to have resulted from, the HPV and MCV vaccinations administered on or about July 21, 2016, as alleged by petitioner in a petition for vaccine compensation filed on or about April 15, 2019, in the United States Court of Federal Claims as petition No. 19-556V.

14. If petitioner should die prior to entry of judgment, this agreement shall be voidable upon proper notice to the Court on behalf of either or both of the parties.

15. If the special master fails to issue a decision in complete conformity with the terms of this Stipulation or if the United States Court of Federal Claims fails to enter judgment in conformity with a decision that is in complete conformity with the terms of this Stipulation, then the parties' settlement and this Stipulation shall be voidable at the sole discretion of either party.

16. This Stipulation expresses a full and complete negotiated settlement of liability and damages claimed under the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986, as amended, except as otherwise noted in paragraph 9 above. There is absolutely no agreement on the part of the parties hereto to make any payment or do any act or thing other than is herein expressly stated and clearly agreed to. The parties further agree and understand that the award described in this Stipulation may reflect a compromise of the parties' respective positions as to liability and/or amount of damages, and further, that a change in the nature of the injury or condition or in the items of compensation sought, is not grounds to modify or revise this agreement.

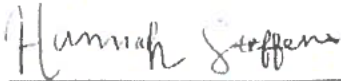
17. This Stipulation shall not be construed as an admission by the United States or the Secretary of Health and Human Services that the HPV and MCV vaccines caused or significantly aggravated petitioner's alleged POTS, sleep apnea, depressive disorder, or any other injury or any of her current disabilities.

18. All rights and obligations of petitioner hereunder shall apply equally to petitioner's heirs, executors, administrators, successors, and/or assigns.

END OF STIPULATION

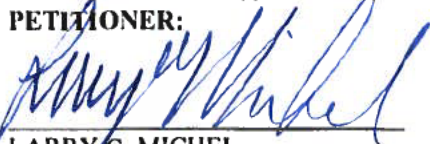
Respectfully submitted,

**PETITIONER:**



HANNAH STEFFENS

**ATTORNEY OF RECORD FOR  
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**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF  
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Date: 2023.02.23  
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Dated: 03/09/2023